

## **MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY AND CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY OPEN INNOVATIVE LIBRARY PROJECTS**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Public Library (CPL) and Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) today joined local officials and community members to open the Independence Branch Library in Irving Park and the Little Italy Branch Library on the Near West Side. The two new branch libraries are among three innovative co-located housing and library developments being built across the city that are designed to serve as community anchors.

“Chicago is breaking the mold and uniting the strengths of our neighborhood libraries with great housing that is affordable and accessible,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Bringing together world-class libraries together with housing builds strong neighborhoods and provides a place for all community residents to gather, share and succeed.”

The Independence Apartments and Independence Branch are located at 4024 N. Elston Avenue. The Independence Branch has an open floor plan with natural light, flexible space for meetings or independent study, a graduated seating staircase and a large ground floor children’s area viewable by the open second floor adult stacks. The library will replace the former Independence Branch Library on Irving Park Road. The Independence Apartments above the library will provide a total of 44 senior apartments, including 30 public housing and 14 affordable apartments.

“The new and improved Independence Branch Library, together with vital affordable housing for our seniors will provide our Irving Park residents with a vital community anchor of world-class design that will serve them for years to come,” said Alderman Margaret Laurino, 39th Ward.

The branch was designed by John Ronan Architects and constructed through a partnership with CHA, Evergreen Real Estate Group, and Evergreen Construction Company serving as the General Contractor for the Project.

“As a mission-minded development company, Evergreen is proud of the role we're playing in bringing this vital building to life,” said David Block, director of development for Evergreen Real Estate Group. “Senior housing and a public library are a natural fit, and this new development will serve Chicago residents from toddlers to seniors for many years to come. We look forward to completing the residential portion of the project this spring, providing much-needed affordable senior housing to this great neighborhood.”

The Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library on the Near West Side are located at 1336 W. Taylor Street. The single-level library has natural light and an open floor plan with a children’s area and YOUmedia space. The Taylor Street Apartments above the library will include a total of 73 apartments, including 37 CHA units, 29 affordable units and seven market rate units.

“The Taylor Street Apartments and Little Italy Branch Library will together provide a vital community anchor where children and families go to read, learn, discover, and explore,” said Alderman Jason C. Ervin, 28th Ward. “This investment will provide our residents with the safe learning and gathering spaces that the children and families of Chicago deserve.”

The branch was designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) and constructed through a partnership with CHA, Related Midwest, and The Bowa Construction Group serving as the General Contractor.

“Libraries have always served as the foundation of healthy, thriving communities where residents can gather and engage in accessible, enriching activities,” says Curt Bailey, President of Related Midwest. “We are extremely proud to bring the Little Italy Branch Library and Taylor Street Apartments to the Near West Side – providing quality mixed-income housing featuring floor to ceiling windows with unique views of the city and modern finishes and amenities including a fitness center and recreation deck. The synergy between affordable, accessible housing and a beacon of education will allow families to continue to thrive.”

Both the Taylor Street Apartments and Independence Apartments will open in the early spring.

Construction on the Northtown Apartments and Northtown Branch at 6800 N. Western Avenue in West Ridge is underway and will be complete this year. The apartment building will provide 44 senior apartments, including 30 CHA and 14 affordable units. Developed by Evergreen Real Estate Group, the project was designed by Perkins+Will.

Each branch will offer additional programs and services to meet the residents they serve. All three new library locations will offer an Early Learning Play Space, designed to support parents and caregivers in developing their child’s early literacy skills through play; a YOUmedia space for teens to explore digital design, music and recording, technology, 3D and 2D making and more with the help of skilled mentors; and dedicated workforce development support and technology tutors called CyberNavigators for adults hoping to learn basic computer skills or apply for a job online. CPL will continue to partner with expert workforce organizations to deliver trainings on additional skills, such as resume writing, interview prep and industry-specific skills. The new branches will also have traditional library programs, such as book clubs for seniors and intergenerational educational and cultural programming.

“We know how essential our libraries are to the communities of Chicago as neighborhood anchors,” said Chicago Public Library Commissioner Brian Bannon. “Thanks to Mayor Emanuel’s vision, our partnership with CHA, and the creativity of renowned designers, we’re able to provide our award-winning programs inside innovative spaces that reflect the vibrancy of the communities we serve.”

The housing and library developments were designed by three of the city’s top architecture and design firms which were selected following a design competition sponsored by the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development. The competition was part of Mayor Emanuel’s vision to bring world-class design to Chicago neighborhoods and break from the standard, cookie-cutter designs that are common to government buildings. All three architecture firms selected have strong Chicago roots and have won awards for design excellence and innovation.

“We are pleased to see the new library and all it offers the community,” said CHA CEO Eugene E. Jones, Jr. “We are looking forward to the opening of the apartments soon, and know that our investment in these innovative developments will serve neighborhood residents well for years to come.”

Under Mayor Emanuel’s leadership, more than \$275 million in new investments have been made in Chicago Public Library under the “Branching Out: Building Libraries, Building Communities” initiative to develop and modernize community libraries throughout the city. Branching Out focuses on investing in key areas of neighborhood libraries including: modern facilities and infrastructure, and high quality programming with librarians and administrators. Since 2011, 6 new libraries have been built and significant updates have been made at 14 branches. By 2019, an additional 5 new libraries will be built, and renovations at 4 libraries will be complete.

Full library services at the Independence Branch Library will commence at the Community Celebration on Saturday, February 6 and at Little Italy's Community Celebration on Saturday, February 23.

### **About Chicago Public Library**

Since 1873, Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services; was named the first ever winner of the National Summer Learning Association's Founder's Award in recognition of its Summer Learning Challenge; and was ranked number one in the U.S., and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit [chipublic.org](http://chipublic.org). To follow CPL on social media, visit us on Twitter (@chipublic), Facebook (Chicago Public Library), or Instagram (Chicago Public Library).

### **About Chicago Housing Authority**

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) helps build vibrant communities across the city. By using housing as a platform, the agency works with a host of key stakeholders to sustain strong neighborhoods to best prepare CHA residents for the global economy on their road toward self-sufficiency. CHA also provides stable, decent, safe and affordable housing to more than 62,000 low-income families and individuals, while supporting healthy communities in neighborhoods throughout Chicago.